

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION

(PCT Rule 61.2)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

Commissioner
 US Department of Commerce
 United States Patent and Trademark
 Office, PCT
 2011 South Clark Place Room
 CP2/5C24
 Arlington, VA 22202
 ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE
 in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing (day/month/year)

24 July 2002 (24.07.02)

International application No.

PCT/US01/10818

Applicant's or agent's file reference

F146122

International filing date (day/month/year)

17 May 2001 (17.05.01)

Priority date (day/month/year)

22 May 2000 (22.05.00)

Applicant

AMONG, Frank et al

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:



in the demand filed with the International Preliminary Examining Authority on:

26 November 2001 (26.11.01)



in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:

2. The election ☒ was

was not

made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

The International Bureau of WIPO
 34, chemin des Colombettes
 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35

Authorized officer

Zakaria EL KHODARY

Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38

PCT

DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)


Applicant's or agent's file reference F146122	IMPORTANT DECLARATION	Date of mailing(day/month/year) 03/09/2001
International application No. PCT/US 01/ 10818	International filing date(day/month/year) 17/05/2001	(Earliest) Priority date(day/month/year) 22/05/2000
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC G06F17/60		
Applicant PAN TRAVEL, LLC		

This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that **no international search report will be established on the international application for the reasons indicated below**

1. ☒ The subject matter of the international application relates to:
 - a. ☐ scientific theories.
 - b. ☐ mathematical theories
 - c. ☐ plant varieties.
 - d. ☐ animal varieties.
 - e. ☐ essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes.
 - f. ☒ schemes, rules or methods of doing business.
 - g. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts.
 - h. ☐ schemes, rules or methods of playing games.
 - i. ☐ methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy.
 - j. ☐ methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy.
 - k. ☐ diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body.
 - l. ☐ mere presentations of information.
 - m. ☐ computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art.
2. ☐ The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

☐ the description
 ☐ the claims
 ☐ the drawings
3. ☐ The failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
 ☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
4. Further comments:

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority  European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer María Rodríguez Nóvoa
--	--

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The subject-matter claimed in claims 1-53,140-151 falls under the provisions of Article 17(2)(a)(i) and Rule 39.1(iii) PCT, such subject-matter relating to a method of doing business.

Claims 54-139 relate to commonplace technological features for performing the business method of the method claims. Although these claims do not literally belong to the method category, they essentially claim protection for the same commercial effect as the method claims. With reference to the Guidelines, B-VIII, points 1-6, the International Searching Authority considers that searching such commercial features would serve no useful purpose. This applies to the remaining commonplace technological features of these claims as well.

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
29 November 2001 (29.11.2001)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 01/90992 A2

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: **G06F 17/60**

(21) International Application Number: **PCT/US01/10818**

(22) International Filing Date: **17 May 2001 (17.05.2001)**

(25) Filing Language: **English**

(26) Publication Language: **English**

(30) Priority Data:
60/205,559 **22 May 2000 (22.05.2000)** **US**

(71) Applicant (*for all designated States except US*): **PAN TRAVEL, LLC** [US/US]; Panda Building, 1017 Kapahula Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96816 (US).

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (*for US only*): **AMONG, Frank** [US/US]; Pan Travel, LLC, Panda Building, 1017 Kapahulu Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96816 (US). **FREITAS, Jeffrey** [US/US]; Pan Travel, LLC, Panda Building, 1017 Kapahulu Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96816 (US).

(74) Agents: **BERNSTEIN, Howard, L.** et al.; Sughrue, Mion, Zinn, Macpeak & Seas, PLLC, 2100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20037-3213 (US).

(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— *with declaration under Article 17(2)(a); without abstract; title not checked by the International Searching Authority*

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: **METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING A TOUR PRODUCT PURCHASE**

(57) Abstract:

WO 01/90992 A2

METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING A TOUR PRODUCT PURCHASE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/205,559, filed May 22, 2000, under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).

1. Field Of The Invention

The present invention relates to methods and a system for managing a tour product purchase and more specifically, for permitting buyers to select a final option that includes customized components and multi-site reservations and vendors to directly manage tour product inventory online and in real-time.

2. Background Of The Prior art

In a prior art tour product purchasing process, tour products are purchased directly from a travel agency or a tour wholesaler without automation. A buyer inquires about a desired destination and provides information for desired components, including travel dates, preferred airline, flight times, hotel, and car company. The travel agency or the tour wholesaler then attempts to manually assemble the varying components based on price to produce a complete package. The travel agency or tour wholesaler must then manually determine if the inventory of individual components is available for sale for the selected date after the parameters have been chosen. However, the prior art process must be repeated manually by the travel agency or tour wholesaler each time a buyer alters a value of a parameter of any component to compare pricing (i.e., different room category, different car type, different travel date, etc.) until a final tour product is assembled and purchased. Thus, a significant time and cost disadvantage exists in the prior art method for selecting a tour package.

Additionally, prior art web servers on the Internet permit travel vendors to advertise and sell their products online. The prior art allows online buyers to purchase tour packages that include air, car, hotel and occasionally tour activities at a single price. This allows travel vendors to offer discounts in one area of the "package" while keeping the price of the individual components "hidden," and thus not competing directly with established distribution channels. However, this prior art system has various problems and disadvantages. For example, but not by way of limitation, in the prior art system, there are limited options regarding air, car, hotel and activities and the buyer must purchase the entire package without any customization.

This prior art system also has various problems and disadvantages. For example, but not by way of limitation, while this prior art exists in a limited form, choices are typically limited to air, car or hotel – but do not include customization capability for all three components of a typical "package" tour. In addition, buyers are not able to purchase one component of the tour separate from the others. Thus, customer choice is limited and customization capabilities for package tours are not provided.

Currently, none of the prior art systems allow for customization of package tours for multi-site destinations. In the prior art, if the consumer wishes to travel to multiple destinations in one trip, these destinations must be booked separately, which does not allow for the discounts provided in a "packaged" tour price. Prior art exists for multi-site air reservations, but these are published fare databases and do not offer discount fares or airfares in conjunction with other travel components typical of a package deal. The prior art airline component reservation systems are based on the 4 major central reservation systems (CRS) (i.e., SABRE, APOLLO/GALILEO, AMADEUS, WORLDSPAN). Although data stored on the CRS's is valuable, it comes at a steep price, a fee is charged to the vendor per ticket sold or reservation made. Additional prior art

includes independent systems which bypass the CRS and allow for direct booking of participating vendors via the Internet. These CRS bypass systems are available both to travel agents via Web links, and online directly to consumers. The majority of these systems manage regular "published" fares, although some incorporate a limited inventory of "package" tours and wholesale inventory. Those systems which do bypass the CRS and allow for direct booking at a reduced fee do not currently allow for multi-site destination booking.

To manage inventory of components with a prior art travel wholesaler or reseller, the prior art vendor sends daily or weekly facsimile messages (i.e., S and R) reports showing dates which may be closed out for sale and are thus unavailable, or may open up inventory on dates which may have been previously closed out. This tedious and labor intensive prior art procedure can result in errors due to the nature of human involvement and inherent delays in updating information. Additional prior art includes limited capability of managing wholesale inventory via an Internet connection. Currently, these prior art systems are subscriber based and limited in scope and capability. For example, real-time inventory management, which includes real-time interaction with the vendor database, is currently only available in hotel booking systems.

Thus, the prior art tour product purchase systems have various problems and disadvantages. For example, because wholesale and tour inventory is offered as an inclusive "package", customer choice is limited. In addition, there is no online capability for booking a customized or mix-and-match "package" tour which includes multiple destinations. The prior art air reservation CRS requires significant fees payments to the "middleman" which increases costs to consumers. CRS bypass systems are limited in scope and capability and do not allow for real-time inventory management of wholesale and tour inventory.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is to overcome the various problems and disadvantages of the prior art.

Another object of the present invention is to provide a database and server that holds all of the various components a buyer may want to "mix and match" to produce a desired, customized tour product.

It is yet another object of the present invention to allow a vendor to instantly confirm and manage inventory for all selected suboptions of any components sold by the vendor, which enables a quick and easy electronically ticketed transaction.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide a system that gives a potential buyer the ability to instantly mix and match suboptions for various components, and then easily mix and match additional suboptions for other components to compare price conveniently.

It is another object of the present invention to allow a buyer to book a customized tour product which includes multiple destinations. This capability allows for multiple air reservation bookings in conjunction with other "package" inventory such as hotel and car at each destination.

To achieve these and other objects, there is provided a method for selecting a final option using a client, comprising displaying a plurality of components received in said client, each of said plurality of components having a parameter, and allowing a user to input and manipulate information for said parameter of selected ones of said plurality of components. Also, the client transmits to a server said parameter information received from said user for said selected ones of said components, the client receives from said server a plurality of options generated in response to said transmitted parameter information, each of said plurality of options comprising at least

one suboption that corresponds to a value of one of said selected ones of said components and is selected in accordance with said parameter information, said client sending to said server said final option selected by said user from one of said plurality of options, and the client provides said user with a confirmation generated by said user in response to user-provided reservation information, wherein said method is performed for at least two destinations. Further, the at least one suboption represents inventory that can be immediately confirmed as available and manipulated by a third party in real-time.

Additionally, a method for processing a final option using a server is provided, comprising generating in said server and transmitting to a user interface a plurality of components for use at a plurality of destinations, each of said plurality of components having a parameter, said server receiving information for said parameter of at least one of said plurality of components for use in at least two of said plurality of destinations. The method further comprises generating and transmitting a plurality of options to said user interface, each of said plurality of options comprising at least one suboption that corresponds to a value for selected ones of said plurality of components and is generated in accordance with suboption availability information received in said server from a third party. The method also comprises said server transmitting to said user interface a request for reservation confirmation data from a user in accordance with said final option selected by said user from said plurality of options, and outputting to said user a confirmation generated in response to said reservation confirmation data, wherein said third party can directly and immediately modify levels of inventory of said at least one suboption.

In the present invention, yet another method of purchasing a final option is provided, that comprises providing a user with a plurality of components for a plurality of sequential

destinations, each of said plurality of components having a parameter, receiving parameter information from said user, and in a single transmission, providing said parameter information for selected ones of said plurality of components to a processor. The method also comprises generating a plurality of options for said plurality of sequential destinations, in response to said parameter information, each of said plurality of options comprising at least one suboption having a value for each of said selected ones of said components, said suboption generated in accordance with said parameter information and said user selecting a final option from said plurality of options. Additionally, the method comprises sending a confirmation to said user indicative of an electronic reservation of said final option, wherein an availability of said at least one suboption is determined in accordance with information directly updated in real time by a third party.

Further, a system for selecting a final option is provided, comprising a client system that receives a plurality of components, each of said plurality of components having a parameter configured to store user-provided information, receives a plurality of options generated in response to said user-provided information, and outputs said final option selected from said plurality of options by a user. A server system is also provided that generates and transmits, to said client system, said plurality of options, each of said plurality of options including a plurality of destinations and comprising at least suboption that has a value corresponding to one of said plurality of components and is selected in accordance with said parameter information, wherein said server system is directly updateable by a third party in real-time in response to an inventory level of at said least one suboption.

Also, a client system for selecting a final option is provided, comprising an input system receiving a plurality of input signals that comprises a first input signal comprising a plurality of

components, each of said plurality of components having a parameter with a user-determined value, and a second input signal comprising a plurality of options, each of said plurality of options having a suboption comprising a value corresponding to one of said plurality of components and generated in accordance with said user-determined value of said parameter. The client system further comprises an output system generating a plurality of output signals, said plurality of output signals comprising a first output signal comprising said user-determined value of said parameter for at least one of said plurality of components, and a second output signal comprising a final option selected from said plurality of options, wherein said output device is configured to change said second input signal in response to a user input. The final option comprises a plurality of destinations corresponding to said components in an itinerary having a single price.

Further, a system for selecting a final option is provided, comprising a plurality of parameters, each of said parameters configured to store information, and a plurality of components simultaneously presented in a display, each of said plurality of components displaying at least one of said plurality of parameters in said display. The system also comprises an information source that provides said information stored in at least one of said plurality of parameters in response to said display, and a plurality of options generated in response to said information, each of said plurality of options comprising at least one suboption having a value corresponding to selected ones of said plurality of components, said plurality of options selected in accordance with said stored information for a plurality of destinations, and an inventory monitor that classifies said at least one suboption as one of available and unavailable, prevents said unavailable suboption from inclusion in said plurality of options. The inventory monitor

allows the available suboption to be included in said plurality of options, wherein said final option is selected from said plurality of options.

As another preferred embodiment of the present invention, a server system for selecting a final option is provided, comprising a first system that generates a display comprising a plurality of components, each of said plurality of components having a parameter configured to store information provided by a user, and a second system that receives said user-provided information for said parameter of at least one of said plurality of components and generates a plurality of options, each of said plurality of options including at least one suboption having a value selected in accordance with said user-provided information and corresponding to one of said plurality of components. The server system receives said final option that has a plurality of destinations and is selected by a user from said plurality of options, and a third party can adjust availability and price of said plurality of options in accordance with inventory levels of said at least one suboption.

Also, a user interface for selecting an option is provided, having a first screen that comprises a first object comprising at least one field for a user to enter information corresponding to an itinerary, and a second object comprising a plurality of components indicative of corresponding travel options. Each of said components has at least one parameter that receives parameter information from a user, and each of said travel options has a plurality of sequential destinations. The user interface also comprises an activation object that transmits said information entered by said user in said first and second objects to a processor that monitors and determines availability of a suboption corresponding to one of said plurality of components, said processor generating a plurality of options in accordance with an inventory level of each of said plurality of components.

Further, a method for updating inventory information is provided, comprising directly accessing a data storage medium having said inventory information, selecting one of a plurality of inventory review options, reviewing one of a plurality of properties in a plurality of destinations in accordance with said selecting step, selecting one of a plurality of update options, and updating inventory information in said storage medium in response to said one of said plurality of update options, wherein a third party can access said data storage medium by a client system.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are included to provide a further understanding of preferred embodiments of the present invention and are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and together with the description serve to explain the principles of the drawings.

Figure 1 illustrates a system for managing a travel tour package according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 illustrates a system for vendor update according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 3 illustrates a customer package selection process according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 illustrates a method for selecting a tour package according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 illustrates a method for purchasing a selected tour package according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention; and

Figure 6 illustrates a confirmation process according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Reference will now be made in detail to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. One of ordinary skill in the art can extend the tour package purchase system to other online product selection systems.

In the present invention, the terms are meant to have the definition provided in the specification, and are otherwise not limited by the specification. In this invention, the term "component" refers to various tourism product or service categories available for selection, such as air travel, hotel accommodations, car rental and various tour activities.

The term "parameter" refers to data fields that are located within each component and are capable of storing and communicating information entered by a buyer. For example, an airline component may include a preferred airline, destination and origin, and travel times and dates. Based on this terminology, a component may have one or more parameters, and a user may either enter information in any number of parameters in a component or decline to enter information in a parameter. Once information has been entered in a parameter required for selection of the component, such as, for example a checkbox indicating whether a component has been selected, the component is said to have been selected for further processing, as discussed below.

The term "suboption" represents a value of a selected component, wherein the buyer has entered parameter information required for the component to be selected. A suboption can be

chosen by a server. For example, an actual airline flight ticket represents a suboption for a selected airline travel component.

The term "option" includes suboptions combined and priced together to form a package for price comparison with other options. For example, if a user has provided parameter information to select airline and hotel components, an option may include an actual airline ticket suboption for the airline component and a hotel reservation suboption for the hotel accommodations component.

The term "final option" refers to one of the plurality of options selected for purchase by a user. For example, a user may select a final option by comparing the price of several options.

Figure 1 illustrates a client/server system for managing a tour product purchase according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The client 102 includes a Web browser 100 that permits the buyer to view content and optionally a security system 101 requiring a login that authorizes the buyer to access the client/server system. Devices that couple the client 102 to the server 105, such as a wireless or land line modem, may also be provided in the present invention. Additionally, the present invention may operate as an Intranet or a closed client/server system without Internet access.

The server is connected to a database 108 that houses data necessary to operate the preferred embodiment of the present invention. The server 105 stores and processes information for the web pages 103, that the client 102 receives for the buyer to view with the browser 100. Additionally, the server 105 accesses information from the database 108 including, but not limited to, travel inventory 107 and customer information 106. The travel inventory 107 includes data for the hotel database, the car rental database, the activity database, a database of inventories and prices from the various vendors. The customer information database 106

includes client and customer information and identification and client tracking information. The server 105 provides the mechanism for creating customized tour packages 104 from the selected travel options as provided by the database and determined by the client. The packaging mechanism also checks for availability of inventory, searches for the lowest price options, and automatically applies discounts for qualified travelers.

Additionally, flight information and airline flight inventory 109 may be housed on an external database 110, accessed by interfacing with a prior art CRS booking engine (e.g., SABRE, APOLLO/GALILEO, AMADEUS, WORLDSPAN) to enable real time flight class availability. Figure 2 illustrates a vendor update system according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention. Vendor access to a central server 105 is a key that makes the system work smoothly. Vendors may directly adjust inventory levels in a number of ways. For example, vendors may close out certain dates that are not available for sale by clicking on a specific date on a calendar displayed on a vendor interface 201, 202, 203, 204 close out a specified range of dates, adjust price levels for a specific date or a range of dates, or offer a "block" of rooms at a certain price that would be decremented as the number of rooms are sold.

Each vendor has an interface 201, 202, 203, 204 and can communicate with the central server 105 directly to facilitate data updates 205, 206, 207, 208 and either close out or open up inventory corresponding to suboption availability in real time, 24 hours a day via the a Web browser, utilizing a unique login name and password. The preferred embodiment of the present invention bypasses the prior art CRS at a considerable cost savings for participating vendors. The key element is the direct manipulation by vendors of inventory data, which is instantly uploaded and changeable.

Direct inventory control of suboptions by vendors removes the prior art "middleman" from the procedure. All data input by vendors is stored in a master database, 108 on the central server 105. The invention allows timely and fresh data to be available for anyone wishing to purchase a travel package. Accordingly, only products that are actually available are displayed. For example, if a suboption such as a hotel property or specific car type from a certain car company is sold out for a particular day desired by a prospective buyer, the unavailable suboption will not be offered for that component.

Figure 3 illustrates a parameter data input and component selection method according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention. In a first step 300, the buyer, with access to the communication network, first inputs State of residence and other login information. The State of residence is utilized as a locational qualifier to determine the types of rate structures to present to the buyer. In certain markets, special rates are reserved only for local residents. For example, Hawaiian residents can receive special rates in Hawaii, while different rates exist for visitors from the United States mainland and foreign visitors. The preferred embodiment of the present invention allows for automatic generation of specialized pricing for qualifying individuals (based upon identified State of residence).

The buyer then determines which travel components he/she is interested in 301; options include car, airline and hotel 302 or car and airline 303. The buyer inputs information regarding travel dates, times, city or origin, the number and type of travelers 304. The buyer is prompted whether the trip will include a single or multiple destinations 305. If multiple destinations (e.g. islands in the Hawaiian chain) are selected 307, the buyer is prompted to input further parameter information for each destination 304. Once the buyer has entered all of the necessary information for the multiple destinations 307, the island destinations selection step 305 is

complete. The buyer may then choose to determine vendor preferences 308 for airline 310, hotel 311, or car rental 312. If the buyer chooses not to input vendor preferences, the system will automatically provide default vendors 309 based upon the lowest price options. The system will also prompt the buyer regarding other travel products and services which may be available for purchase 313. Once the buyer has provided parameter information for the selected components of a tour package, a click on the "price this itinerary" button will instantly take all variables into consideration and return with a selection of the lowest price options that may interest the buyer, 314. After reviewing the automatically generated package the buyer may opt to change vendor preferences, 315, and/or have the system provide further options. Some airlines allow the "bulk air fares" that are normally packaged with other suboptions of given components, to be sold alone. Most car and hotel properties may either be bought singularly or in combination with additional components, as the buyer desires. The extraordinary flexibility and the ease with which the different suboptions may be combined, priced and recombined in different options and then re-priced online via a network connection, is an advantage of the present invention.

Figure 4 illustrates a method for a buyer to purchase a tour package according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention. After the buyer has provided parameter information for components 400 and selected the desired components 401, suboptions are generated and priced by the server 105 for the selected components from the airline, hotel, car and other travel products/services price databases 402, 403, 404, 405. The information is sent to the server for compilation 104, which returns with the lowest priced options 408. If the passenger is identified as qualified for special pricing (such as a resident of Hawaii) the pricing rate is automatically applied to the qualifying travel suboptions 407.

After deciding upon the final option, the buyer then may select 409 a presented “package”, which sends the suboption data to the internal server 105 and the external airline reservation system 110 for live inventory availability and flight schedules if the airline component has been chosen. After the selection 409 of the final option, a list of terms and conditions specific to the selection is presented 410. The buyer may then decline 411, thereby ending the transaction, or agree 412 and proceed to a subsequent phase of the checkout process.

Figure 5 illustrates a method for purchasing a final option selected by the buyer according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention. Once the buyer has agreed 500 to purchase the final option, the buyer inputs 501 the name, billing address, company name, phone contact and email address of the person that is traveling and is the credit card holder. Once all buyer data has been input 501, the information is sent 502 to the appropriate system 107, 110. If the airline component has been chosen and a suboption has thus been generated as a part of the selected final option the external airline reservation system may be accessed 110. Once the “continue” button has been clicked, the buyer is prompted for additional information to complete the reservation. For example, the names of any additional travelers and/or frequent flyer number information may be input 505. The buyer information is prepopulated into the name field along with the phone number, as well as an optional business phone number.

After the final reservation information needed to complete a passenger reservation has been input 505, the buyer must input the credit card information 506, or hold the reservation of the final option in the system for up to 48 hours. The credit card may be denied 507 or the reservation may be confirmed 508. The vendors may then invoice the packager for the individual services provided.

Figure 6 illustrates a confirmation process according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Once the credit card information is input and the buyer has purchased the final option 600, a match is done by the central server that receives the buyer's response 601 to ensure that the credit card holder's name and address match the account, and if an approval is returned for the full amount, the system automatically completes the purchase by removing funds from the buyer's account.

A confirmation message (e.g., email) is instantly sent 602 to all vendors that have a suboption corresponding to a selected component in the final option. The confirmation message verifies that a reservation was made and includes the buyer name, the products or services purchased, a tracking number, and the record locator of the air component, if any.

In addition to sending confirmation messages to the vendors 602, a confirmation message (e.g., email) is also sent to any travel agent 606 that booked the package or suboptions of the final option, and to the buyer 604,,607, if the buyer's contact information (e.g., email address) is available. A follow-up daily reconciliation message (e.g., email or fax) is also sent to all vendors at the end of each day re-listing all bookings of suboptions selected as part of a final option made that day as a verification.

Another embodiment of the present invention allows for the tracking of sales by an individual or by an entity. An individual may enroll online in an incentive program and receive special access to the site via a login name and password. In addition to receiving special offers from participating vendors, the members can track sales and receive incentive points for rewards and prizes. Travel agents can manage pending reservations, commission payments, cancellations and incentive points online, including a running tally of total incentive points earned and a list of potential rewards. Further, an organization or corporation may track sales to earn incentive

rewards and prizes from the participating vendors, as well as monetary incentives based on a percentage of sales. All pertinent information is presented only to the specific entity logged in to the site with a valid login and password.

The present invention has various advantages. For example, the present invention allows a buyer to simultaneously mix and match various components of a tour package to generate suboptions and then compare tour price package process offers ease of use and flexibility to alter schedules instantaneously. The mix and match capability extends to various inventories not in the current CRS and includes the ability to book multiple site destinations in one comprehensive itinerary. Further, the present invention also permits direct, real-time, 24-hour access to the database on a central server, which eliminates the prior art errors, and reduces the cost of the tour package by eliminating the "middleman."

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in methods and apparatus for managing a tour product purchase of the present invention without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Thus, it is intended that the present invention cover the modifications and variations of this invention provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents. For example, it is understood that one of ordinary skill in the art may provide a confirmation message through electronic mail, facsimile, telephone message, hard copy, or any other available communication method. Further, it is understood that while the present invention discloses the use of the Internet, one of ordinary skill in the art would also use an Intranet or a closed network system to communicate between the client system and the server. Thus, the additional embodiments that would have been obvious to one skilled in the art are included in the present invention.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for selecting a final option using a client, comprising:
displaying a plurality of components received in said client, each of said plurality of components having a parameter, and allowing a user to input and manipulate information for said parameter of selected ones of said plurality of components;
said client transmitting to a server said parameter information received from said user for said selected ones of said components;
said client receiving from said server a plurality of options generated in response to said transmitted parameter information, each of said plurality of options comprising at least one suboption that corresponds to a value of one of said selected ones of said components and is selected in accordance with said parameter information, said client sending to said server said final option selected by said user from one of said plurality of options; and
providing said user with a confirmation generated by said user in response to user-provided reservation information, wherein said method is performed for at least two destinations, and said at least one suboption represents inventory that can be immediately confirmed as available and manipulated by a third party in real-time.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising coupling said client to a network via a communications device and providing said user with a single user interface to view said at least two destinations and generate a single itinerary having a single price.
3. The method of claim 1, further said user selecting multiple airfares in a sequence of said at least two destinations.

4. The method of claim 1, said client receiving step further comprising one of said client and said server sorting said plurality of options according to price.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
said client transmitting user-generated payment information to said server in response to said selected final option; and

said client receiving one of an approval and a denial of said final option selection in response to said user-generated payment information.

6. The method of claim 5, said client transmitting user-generated payment information step comprising said client transmitting to said server at least one of payment account information, billing address, company name, telephone contact information and electronic mail address of said user.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising said client receiving a user-generated discount code indicative of a discount criteria of said user, and transmitting said discount code to said server that generates a discount.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said third party comprises a vendor selling said inventory via said server, and confirming and changing availability of said inventory in response to said final option.

9. The method of claim 8, comprising said vendor selling said at least one suboption comprising one of a hotel room, a vehicle rental, an air transportation ticket, a travel tour and a travel service or a product.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing step further comprises said client receiving said confirmation from said server for at least one of said third party and a travel agent.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said displaying step comprises displaying said plurality of components comprising at least one of lodging accommodations, surface transportation options, air transportation accommodations, and reservation options received in said client.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said transmitting step comprises transmitting parameters for at least one of:

said air transportation accommodations comprising at least one of desired travel dates, desired travel times, desired airlines and desired flight requests;

said surface transportation options comprising at least one of desired vehicle type, desired vehicle rental price and desired vehicle rental company;

said lodging accommodations comprising at least one of specific room type, hotel classification, hotel chain and hotel rating; and

said reservation options comprising surface tours, travel insurance, luggage, clothing, video entertainment, audio entertainment and food products.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

said user combining at least one first suboption of a first option with at least one second suboption of a second option; and

said client transmitting said at least one first suboption and said at least one second suboption to said server to generate said final option.

14. A method for processing a final option using a server, comprising:

generating in said server and transmitting to a user interface a plurality of components for use at a plurality of destinations, each of said plurality of components having a parameter;

said server receiving information for said parameter of at least one of said plurality of components for use in at least two of said plurality of destinations, and generating and transmitting a plurality of options to said user interface, each of said plurality of options comprising at least one suboption that corresponds to a value for selected ones of said plurality of components and is generated in accordance with suboption availability information received in said server from a third party;

said server transmitting to said user interface a request for reservation confirmation data from a user in accordance with said final option selected by said user from said plurality of options; and

outputting to said user a confirmation generated in response to said reservation confirmation data, wherein said third party can directly and immediately modify levels of inventory of said at least one suboption.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising coupling said server to a network via a communications device and providing said plurality of components to said user interface via said network, wherein said user selects options for a sequence of at least two of said plurality of destinations to generate a single itinerary having a single price.

16. The method of claim 14, said transmitting step further comprising said server sorting said plurality of options according to price.

17. The method of claim 14, wherein said outputting step comprises sending one of a facsimile, electronic mail, pager, voicemail and hard copy confirmation to said user.

18. The method of claim 14, further comprising:
said server receiving user-generated payment information in response to said final option selection; and

said server one of approving and denying said final option selection in response to said user-generated payment information.

19. The method of claim 18, said server receiving said user-generated payment information step comprising said server receiving at least one of payment account, billing address, company name, telephone contact information and electronic mail address data of said user.

20. The method of claim 14, further comprising said server displaying in said user interface purchase terms and conditions for approval by said user prior to said outputting step.

21. The method of claim 14, further comprising:

said server receiving a discount code indicative of a discount criteria of said user; and
calculating a discount in response to said discount code.

22. The method of claim 21, said server receiving said discount code step comprising said server receiving a user-generated location code.

23. The method of claim 14, wherein said third party confirming said availability in said server comprises a vendor that sells said at least one of said suboptions via said server.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising said vendor selling at least one of hotel rooms, vehicle rentals, air transportation, travel tours and activities.

25. The method of claim 14, further comprising said server storing said final option for a prescribed interval.

26. The method of claim 14, further comprising said server receiving at least one of said plurality of components from a third-party central reservation system, wherein said third-party central reservation system components comprises an airline reservation received from said server.

27. The method of claim 14, further comprising said server monitoring a plurality of said final options.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein one of said user, a travel agent and said third party accesses said plurality of final options monitored in said server.

29. The method of claim 14, wherein said outputting step further comprises said server providing said confirmation to one of said third party and a travel agent, and further comprising said server providing to said third party a plurality of said confirmations generated during a predetermined interval.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein said third party receives from said server said plurality of confirmations on a daily interval.

31. The method of claim 14, wherein said generating step comprises generating said plurality of components comprising lodging accommodations, surface transportation options, air transportation accommodations and services or products reservation options.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein:

said parameter for said air transportation accommodations comprises at least one of desired travel dates, desired travel times, desired airlines and desired flight requests;

said parameter for said surface transportation options comprises at least one of desired vehicle type, desired vehicle rental price and desired vehicle rental company;

said parameter for said lodging accommodations comprises at least one of specific room type, hotel classification, hotel chain and hotel rating; and

said parameter for said reservation options comprises at least one of surface tours, travel insurance, luggage, clothing, video entertainment, audio entertainment and food products.

33. A method of purchasing a final option, comprising:

providing a user with a plurality of components for a plurality of sequential destinations, each of said plurality of components having a parameter;

receiving parameter information from said user, and in a single transmission, providing said parameter information for selected ones of said plurality of components to a processor;

generating a plurality of options for said plurality of sequential destinations, in response to said parameter information, each of said plurality of options comprising at least one suboption having a value for each of said selected ones of said components, said suboption generated in accordance with said parameter information and said user selecting a final option from said plurality of options; and

sending a confirmation to said user indicative of an electronic reservation of said final option, wherein an availability of said at least one suboption is determined in accordance with information directly updated in real time by a third party.

34. The method of claim 33, further comprising said user accessing a network via a communications device and using a user interface to view an input from the network.

35. The method of claim 33, further comprising sorting said plurality of options by price.

36. The method of claim 33, further comprising:
said user providing payment information to a server in response to said final option selection; and

one of an approving and a denying said user's said final option in response to said payment information.

37. The method of claim 36, said user providing payment information step comprising providing said server with at least one of payment account information, billing address, company name, telephone contact information and electronic mail address of said user.

38. The method of claim 33, further comprising displaying purchase terms and conditions for approval by said user prior to said sending said confirmation step.

39. The method of claim 33, further comprising generating a discount by transmitting to a server a user-generated discount code indicative of a discount criteria of said user.

40. The method of claim 33, further comprising said third party comprising a vendor selling said at least one suboption, said vendor capable of confirming and changing availability of said at least one suboption in response to said final option.

41. The method of claim 40, comprising said vendor selling said at least one suboption comprising at least one of a hotel room, a vehicle rental, air transportation, a travel tour and a travel product or service.

42. The method of claim 33, further comprising one of said third party and a travel agent receiving said confirmation.

43. The method of claim 33, said providing step comprising displaying to said user at least one of lodging accommodations, surface transportation options, air transportation accommodations, and reservation options.

44. The method of claim 43, wherein said parameter information for said air transportation accommodations comprises at least one of desired travel dates, desired travel times, desired airlines and desired flight requests.

45. The method of claim 43, wherein said parameter information for said surface transportation options comprises at least one of desired vehicle type, desired vehicle rental price and desired vehicle rental company.

46. The method of claim 43, wherein said parameter information for said lodging accommodations comprises at least one of specific room type, hotel classification, hotel chain and hotel rating.

47. The method of claim 43, wherein said parameter information for said reservation options comprises at least one of surface tours, travel insurance, luggage, clothing, video entertainment, audio entertainment and food products.

48. The method of claim 33, further comprising:

said user matching at least one first suboption from a first option with at least one second suboption from a second option; and

said user transmitting said at least one first suboption and said at least one second suboption to a server to generate said final option.

49. The method of claim 33, wherein said sending step comprises sending said confirmation comprising one of a facsimile, electronic mail, pager, voicemail and hard copy as said confirmation.

50. The method of claim 33, further comprising storing said final option in a memory device for a prescribed time interval.

51. The method of claim 33, further comprising receiving in a server at least one of said plurality of components from an external airline reservation system, and receiving an airline reservation in said server from said reservation system.

52. The method of claim 33, further comprising one of said user, a travel agent and said third party monitoring said plurality of final options.

53. The method of claim 33, further comprising providing to said third party a plurality of said confirmations generated during a predetermined interval.

54. A system for selecting a final option, comprising:

a client system that receives a plurality of components, each of said plurality of components having a parameter configured to store user-provided information, receives a plurality of options generated in response to said user-provided information, and outputs said final option selected from said plurality of options by a user; and

a server system that generates and transmits, to said client system, said plurality of options, each of said plurality of options including a plurality of destinations and comprising at least suboption that has a value corresponding to one of said plurality of components and is selected in accordance with said parameter information, wherein said server system is directly updateable by a third party in real-time in response to an inventory level of at said least one suboption.

55. The system of claim 54, wherein said final option includes said plurality of destinations and has a single itinerary and a single price.

56. The system of claim 54, further comprising:

a communications device that provides said user with access to a remote server via a communication network.

57. The system of claim 54, further comprising:

user payment information provided to said server system in response to said final option selection; and

said user-provided parameter information for said air transportation accommodations comprises at least one of desired travel dates, desired travel times, desired airlines and desired flight requests;

said user-provided parameter information for said surface transportation options comprises at least one of desired vehicle type, desired vehicle rental price and desired vehicle rental company;

said user-provided parameter information for said lodging accommodations comprises at least one of specific room type, hotel classification, hotel chain and hotel rating; and

said user-provided parameter information for said reservation options comprises at least one of surface tours, travel insurance, luggage, clothing, video entertainment, audio entertainment and food products.

66. The system of claim 54, further comprising at least one first suboption from a first option combined with at least one second suboption from a second option to generate said final option.

67. The system of claim 54, further comprising a memory device that stores said final option for a prescribed time interval.

68. The system of claim 54, further comprising a reservation system that receives at least one of said plurality of components from said server system.

69. The system of claim 68, wherein said reservation system comprises an airline reservation system.

70. The system of claim 54, further comprising a plurality of said confirmations generated during a predetermined interval that are provided to said third party.

71. A client system for selecting a final option, comprising:

an input system receiving a plurality of input signals that comprises,
a first input signal comprising a plurality of components, each of said plurality of components having a parameter with a user-determined value, and
a second input signal comprising a plurality of options, each of said plurality of options having a suboption comprising a value corresponding to one of said plurality of components and generated in accordance with said user-determined value of said parameter; and
an output system generating a plurality of output signals, said plurality of output signals comprising,
a first output signal comprising said user-determined value of said parameter for at least one of said plurality of components, and
a second output signal comprising a final option selected from said plurality of options, wherein said output device is configured to change said second input signal in response to a user input, said final option comprising a plurality of destinations corresponding to said components, in an itinerary having a single price.

72. The client system of claim 71, further comprising:

a communications device that couples said client system to the remote server; and
a user interface that allows said user to view said final option, including said components corresponding to said destinations.

73. The client system of claim 71, wherein said plurality of options in said second input signal are sorted according to price.

74. The client system of claim 71, further comprising:

a user-generated payment information output signal in response to an information request input signal; and

one of an approval and a denial input signal received in response to said user-generated payment information output signal.

75. The client system of claim 74, wherein said payment information output signal comprises at least one of payment account information, billing address, company name, telephone contact information and electronic mail address of said user.

76. The client system of claim 71, further comprising a third input signal including purchase terms and conditions, and a fourth input signal including a confirmation signal.

77. The client system of claim 71, further comprising a discount code output signal indicative of a user discount.

78. The client system of claim 77, wherein said discount code is a user-generated location code.

79. The client system of claim 71, further comprising a third party input signal including one of text information, a location indicator and rating information for said at least one suboption.

80. The client system of claim 71, further comprising a third party that controls inventory of said at least one suboption in response to availability of said inventory.

81. The client system of claim 80, wherein said third party comprises a vendor that controls inventory of said at least one suboption comprising one of a hotel room, a vehicle rental, an air transportation ticket, a travel tour and a travel product/service item.

82. The client system of claim 71, further comprising a third input signal including a confirmation message from said server for at least one of a user, said third party and a travel agent.

83. The client system of claim 71, wherein said first input signal comprises said plurality of components comprising at least one of lodging accommodations, surface transportation options, air transportation accommodations, and reservation options received in said client.

84. The client system of claim 83, wherein said parameters for said air transportation accommodations comprise at least one of desired travel dates, desired travel times, desired airlines and desired flight requests.

85. The client system of claim 83, wherein said parameters for said surface transportation options comprise at least one of desired vehicle type, desired vehicle rental price and desired vehicle rental company.

86. The client system of claim 83, wherein said lodging accommodations comprise at least one of specific room type, hotel classification, and hotel chain.

87. The client system of claim 83, wherein said parameters for said reservation options comprise at least one of surface tours, travel insurance, luggage, clothing, video entertainment, audio entertainment and food products.

88. The client system of claim 83, wherein said second output signal comprises at least one first suboption of a first option and at least one second suboption of a second option to generate said final option.

89. A system for selecting a final option, comprising:
a plurality of parameters, each of said parameters configured to store information;
a plurality of components simultaneously presented in a display, each of said plurality of components displaying at least one of said plurality of parameters in said display;

an information source that provides said information stored in at least one of said plurality of parameters in response to said display;

a plurality of options generated in response to said information, each of said plurality of options comprising at least one suboption having a value corresponding to selected ones of said plurality of components, said plurality of options selected in accordance with said stored information for a plurality of destinations; and

an inventory monitor that classifies said at least one suboption as one of available and unavailable, prevents said unavailable suboption from inclusion in said plurality of options and allows said available suboption to be included in said plurality of options, wherein said final option is selected from said plurality of options.

90. The system of claim 89, further comprising a communicator that allows remote access via a communications device and a user interface that facilitates communication.

91. The system of claim 89, wherein said plurality of options is sorted by a characteristic of each of said plurality of options.

92. The system of claim 91, wherein said characteristic is a price of each of said plurality of options.

93. The system of claim 89, further comprising:
payment information provided by a user; and
one of an approval and a denial of said final option in response to said payment information.

94. The system of claim 93, said payment information comprising at least one of payment account information, billing address, company name, telephone contact information and electronic mail address of said user.

95. The system of claim 89, further comprising:
purchase terms and conditions displayed to said user for approval; and
a confirmation sent to said user in response to a purchase of said final option.
96. The system of claim 95, further comprising providing to said third party a plurality of said confirmations generated during a predetermined interval, wherein said third party receives said plurality of confirmations on a daily interval.
97. The system of claim 95, wherein one of said third party and a travel agent receives said confirmation.
98. The system of claim 96, wherein said confirmation comprises one of a facsimile, electronic mail, pager, voicemail and hard copy as said confirmation.
99. The system of claim 89, further comprising a user-generated discount code indicative of a user discount criteria.
100. The system of claim 99, said user-generated discount code comprising a user location code.
101. The system of claim 89, further comprising a third party that provides said at least one suboption to a user, and confirms and changes available inventory of said at least one suboption in response to said final option selected by a user.
102. The system of claim 101, wherein said third party comprises a vendor selling said at least one suboption that comprises at least one of a hotel room, a vehicle rental, an air transportation ticket, a travel tour and a travel product/service item.
103. The system of claim 89, said plurality of components comprising at least one of lodging accommodations, surface transportation options, air transportation accommodations, and reservation options.

104. The system of claim 103, wherein said parameter information for said air transportation accommodations comprises at least one of desired travel dates, desired travel times, desired airlines and desired flight requests.

105. The system of claim 103, wherein said parameter information for said surface transportation options comprises at least one of desired vehicle type, desired vehicle rental price and desired vehicle rental company.

106. The system of claim 103, wherein said parameter information for said lodging accommodations comprises at least one of specific room type, hotel classification, and hotel chain.

107. The system of claim 103, wherein said parameter information for said reservation options comprises at least one of surface tours, travel insurance, luggage, clothing, video entertainment, audio entertainment and food products.

108. The system of claim 89, wherein said final option comprises at least one first suboption selected from a first option and at least one second suboption selected from a second option.

109. The system of claim 89, further comprising a memory device that stores said final option for a prescribed time interval.

110. The system of claim 89, further comprising an external reservation system that receives at least one of said plurality of components.

111. The system of claim 110, wherein said plurality of components comprises an airline reservation from said external reservation system.

112. The system of claim 89, wherein one of said user, a travel agent and a third party accesses said inventory monitor.

113. A server system for selecting a final option, comprising:

a first system that generates a display comprising a plurality of components, each of said plurality of components having a parameter configured to store information provided by a user; and

a second system that receives said user-provided information for said parameter of at least one of said plurality of components and generates a plurality of options, each of said plurality of options including at least one suboption having a value selected in accordance with said user-provided information and corresponding to one of said plurality of components, wherein said server system receives said final option that has a plurality of destinations and is selected by a user from said plurality of options, and wherein a third party can adjust availability and price of said plurality of options in accordance with inventory levels of said at least one suboption.

114. The server system of claim 113, wherein said server system is coupled to a remote server via a communications device, and said display is a user interface accessible via a communication network.

115. The server system of claim 113, wherein said server system sorts said plurality of options according to price and displays said sorted plurality of options to said user, with a single price for each of said options.

116. The server system of claim 113, further comprising one of a facsimile, electronic mail, pager, voicemail and hard copy confirmation sent to said user and indicative of a final purchase of said final option.

117. The server system of claim 113, further comprising:

payment information provided from said user to said server system and indicative of a purchase request for said final option;

one of approval and a denial of said final option generated by said server system in response to said payment information;

an invoice received in said server system from said third party, said invoice initiating a transfer of funds from said client escrow account to said third party.

118. The server system of claim 117, said payment information step comprising at least one of payment account, billing address, company name, telephone contact information and electronic mail address data received by said server system from said user.

119. The server system of claim 113, further comprising a discount code received in said server system from said user and indicative of a user discount criteria.

120. The server system of claim 113, further comprising said server transmitting to said user interface one of textual information, a location indicator and rating information for said at least one suboption stored in said server system.

121. The server system of claim 113, wherein said third party comprises a vendor that sells said at least one suboption via said server system.

122. The server system of claim 121, said one suboption comprising one of hotel rooms, vehicle rentals, air transportation, travel tours and items.

123. The server system of claim 113, further comprising a third-party central reservation system coupled to said server system and receiving said at least one suboption.

124. The server system of claim 123, wherein said third-party external reservation system components comprises an airline reservation.

125. The server system of claim 113, wherein one of said user, a travel agent and said third party accesses a plurality of said final options generated by said server system.

126. The server system of claim 125, wherein said confirmation is sent to one of said third party and a travel agent, and further comprising a plurality of said confirmations generated by said server system during a predetermined time interval.

127. The server system of claim 125, wherein said predetermined time interval comprises a daily interval.

128. The server system of claim 113, wherein said plurality of components comprises lodging accommodations, surface transportation options, air transportation accommodations and reservation options.

129. The server system of claim 128, wherein said parameter for said air transportation accommodations comprises at least one of desired travel dates, desired travel times, desired airlines and desired flight requests, wherein:

said parameter for said surface transportation options comprises at least one of desired vehicle type, desired vehicle rental price and desired vehicle rental company;

said parameter for said lodging accommodations comprises at least one of specific room type, hotel classification, and hotel chain; and

said parameter for said reservation options comprises at least one of surface tours, travel insurance, luggage, clothing, video entertainment, audio entertainment and food products.

130. A user interface for selecting an option, having a first screen that comprises:
a first object comprising at least one field for a user to enter information corresponding to an itinerary;

a second object comprising a plurality of components indicative of corresponding travel options, each of said components having at least one parameter that receives parameter information from a user, and each of said travel options having a plurality of sequential destinations; and

an activation object that transmits said information entered by said user in said first and second objects to a processor that monitors and determines availability of a suboption corresponding to one of said plurality of components, said processor generating a plurality of options in accordance with an inventory level of each of said plurality of components.

131. The user interface of claim 130, wherein said user interface communicates with the remote server via a communications device and displays data received from the remote server.

132. The user interface of claim 130, wherein said user interface transfers said parameter information to a server and displays a final option from said plurality of options, for said plurality of destinations.

133. The user interface of claim 132, wherein said user interface receives object information from, and transmits user-entered information to, a server.

134. The user interface of claim 130, further comprising a second screen for said user interface to display said plurality of options in a sorted order.

135. The user interface of claim 130, further comprising a second screen comprising:
a third object that receives and displays payment information provided by said user to said processor provided by a server in response in a user selection of one of said plurality of options; and

a fourth object that displays one of an approval and a denial said user's selection in response to said payment information.

136. The user interface of claim 135, said third object comprising at least one field for said payment information comprising payment account information, billing address, company name, telephone contact information and electronic mail address.

137. The user interface of claim 130, wherein said plurality of components in said second object comprises at least one of lodging accommodations, surface transportation options, air transportation accommodations, and reservation options.

138. The user interface of claim 137, wherein said parameter information for said air transportation accommodations comprises a field for at least one of desired travel dates, desired travel times, desired airlines and desired flight requests, wherein:

said parameter information for said surface transportation options comprises a field for at least one of desired vehicle type, desired vehicle rental price and desired vehicle rental company;

said parameter information for said lodging accommodations comprises a field for at least one of specific room type, hotel classification, and hotel chain; and

said parameter information for said reservation options comprises a field for at least one of surface tours, travel insurance, luggage, clothing, video entertainment, audio entertainment and food products.

139. The user interface of claim 130, further comprising a second display comprising an object that allows a user to match at least one first suboption from a first selected option with at least one second suboption from a second selected option to generate a third selected option.

140. A method for updating inventory information, comprising:

directly accessing a data storage medium having said inventory information;

selecting one of a plurality of inventory review options;
reviewing one of a plurality of properties in a plurality of destinations in accordance with said selecting step;
selecting one of a plurality of update options; and
updating inventory information in said storage medium in response to said one of said plurality of update options, wherein a third party can access said data storage medium by a client system.

141. The method of claim 140, further comprising accessing said storage medium via a communication network and viewing said inventory information on the communication network with a user interface.

142. The method of claim 140, further comprising displaying said inventory information in a calendar on a user interface.

143. The method of claim 140, said third party comprising a vendor confirming and changing availability of one of said plurality of properties in response to a user purchase.

144. The method of claim 143, comprising said vendor selling said one suboption of said plurality of properties comprising a hotel room, a vehicle rental, air transportation, a travel tour and a travel product/service.

145. The method of claim 140, further comprising sending a confirmation comprising one of a facsimile, electronic mail, pager, voicemail and hard copy.

146. The method of claim 145, further comprising providing to said third party a plurality of said confirmations generated during a predetermined interval, third party receives said plurality of confirmations on a daily interval.

147. The method of claim 140, further comprising storing a user request to purchase inventory in said data storage medium for a prescribed time interval.

148. The method of claim 140, further comprising:

accessing a server from an external reservation system in said updating step; and
updating an airline reservation in said server from said external reservation system.

149. The method of claim 140, further comprising one of said user, a travel agent and said third party monitoring inventory information of said plurality of properties.

150. The method of claim 140, further comprising blocking availability of inventory for a prescribed date range by using said user interface to transmit a message to said data storage medium to block said availability.

151. The method of claim 140, further comprising adjusting price levels for at least one portion of said inventory in response to an input from said third party.

1/6

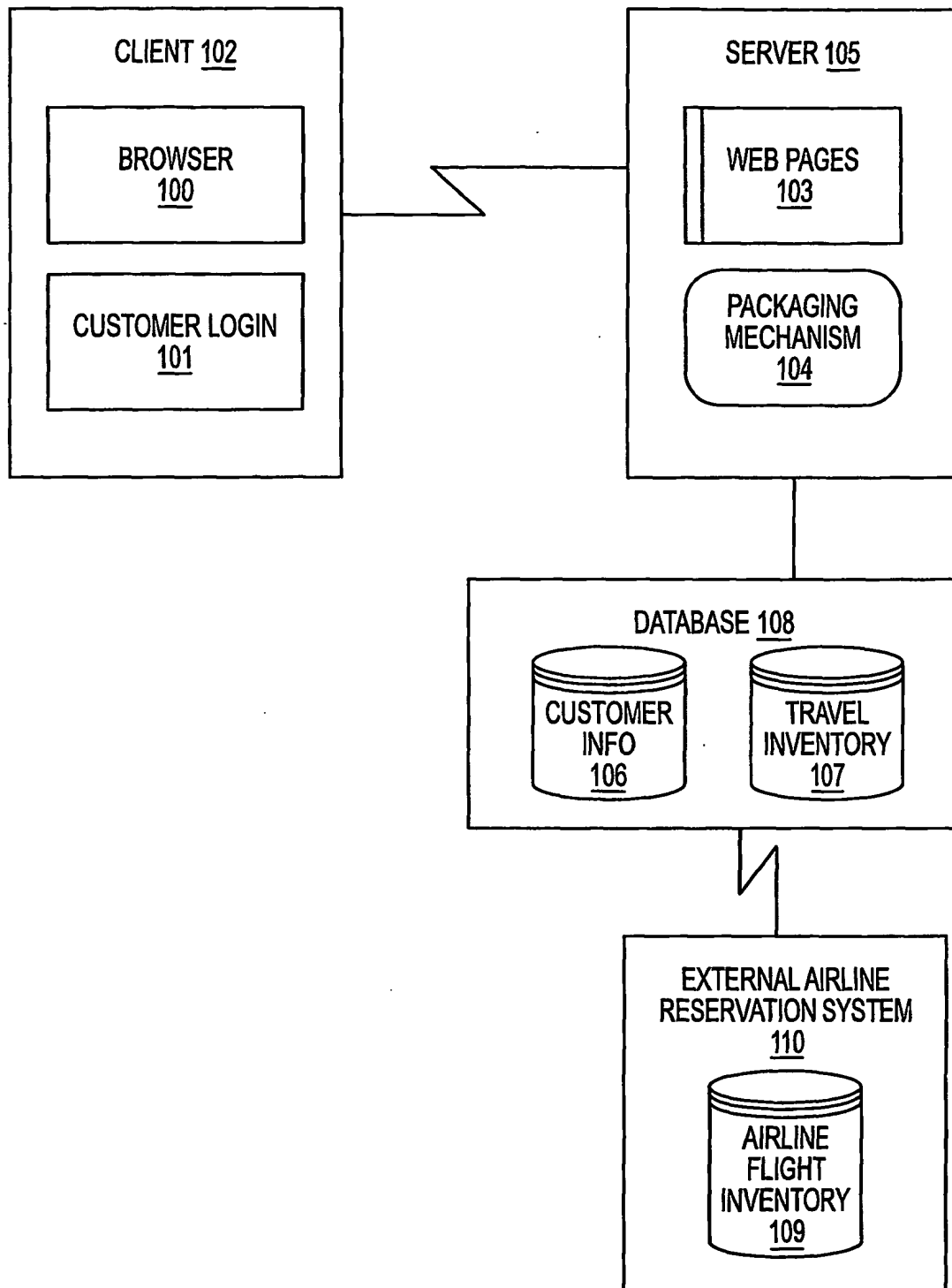


FIG. 1

2/6

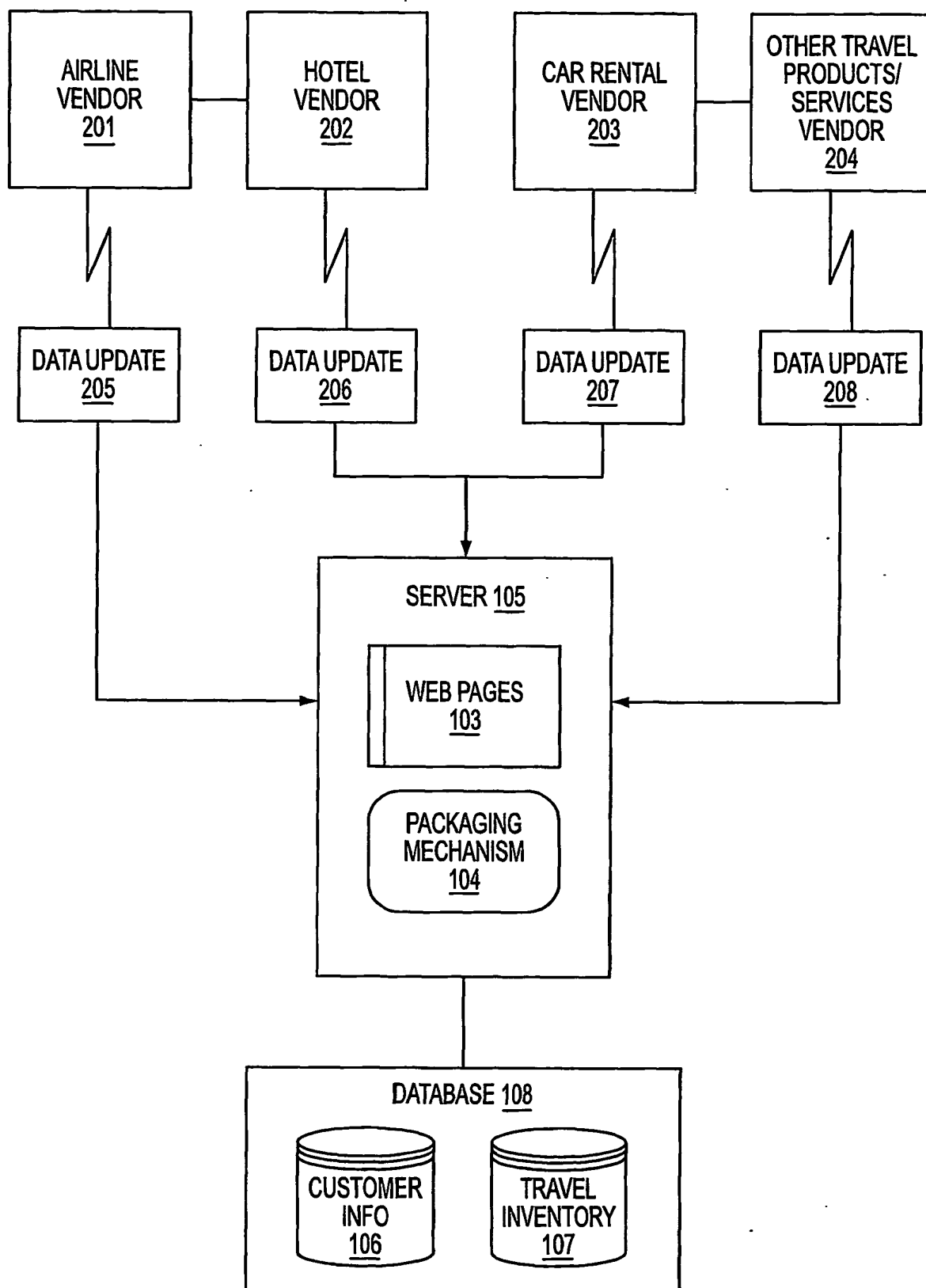


FIG. 2

3/6

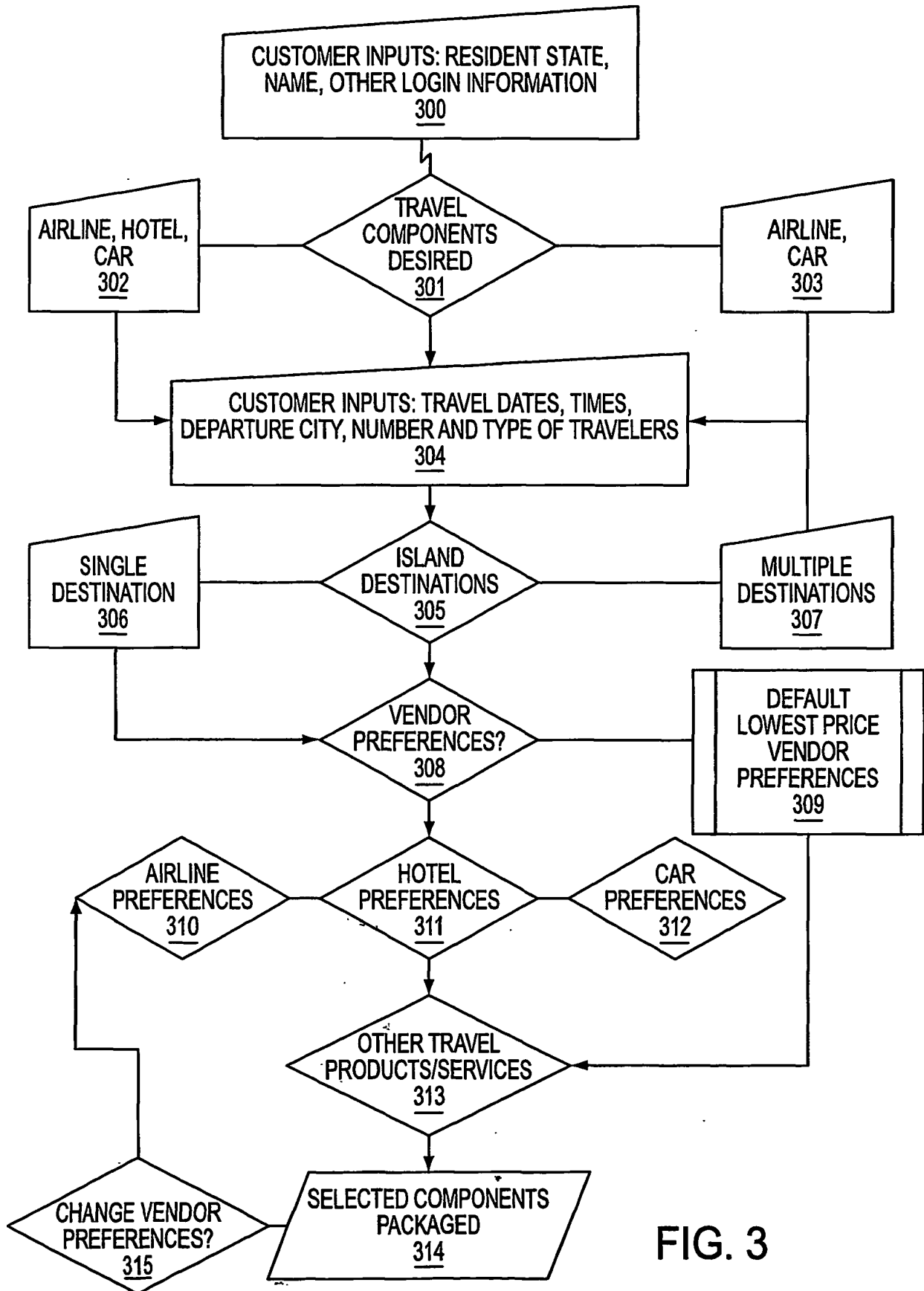


FIG. 3

4/6

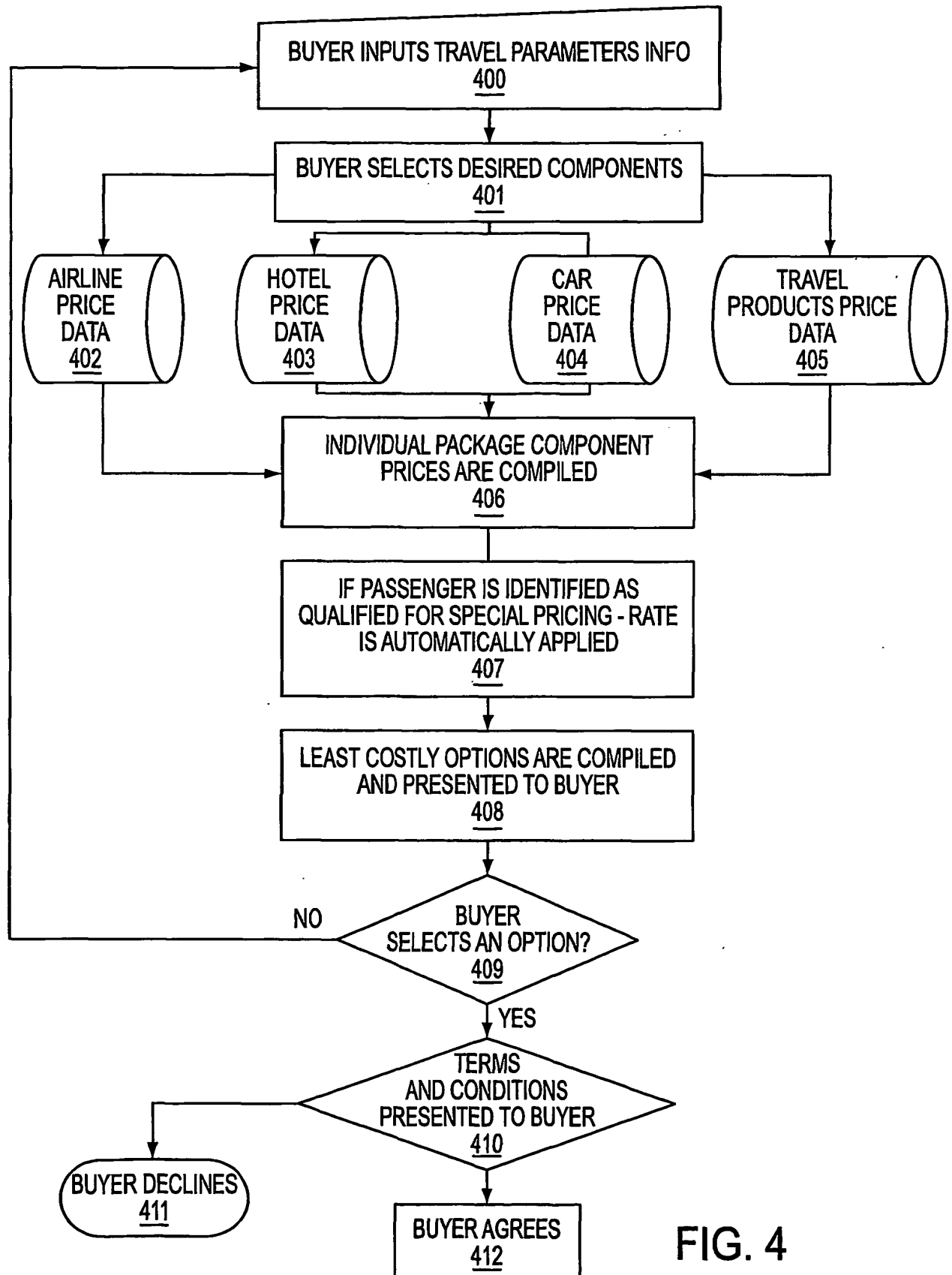


FIG. 4

5/6

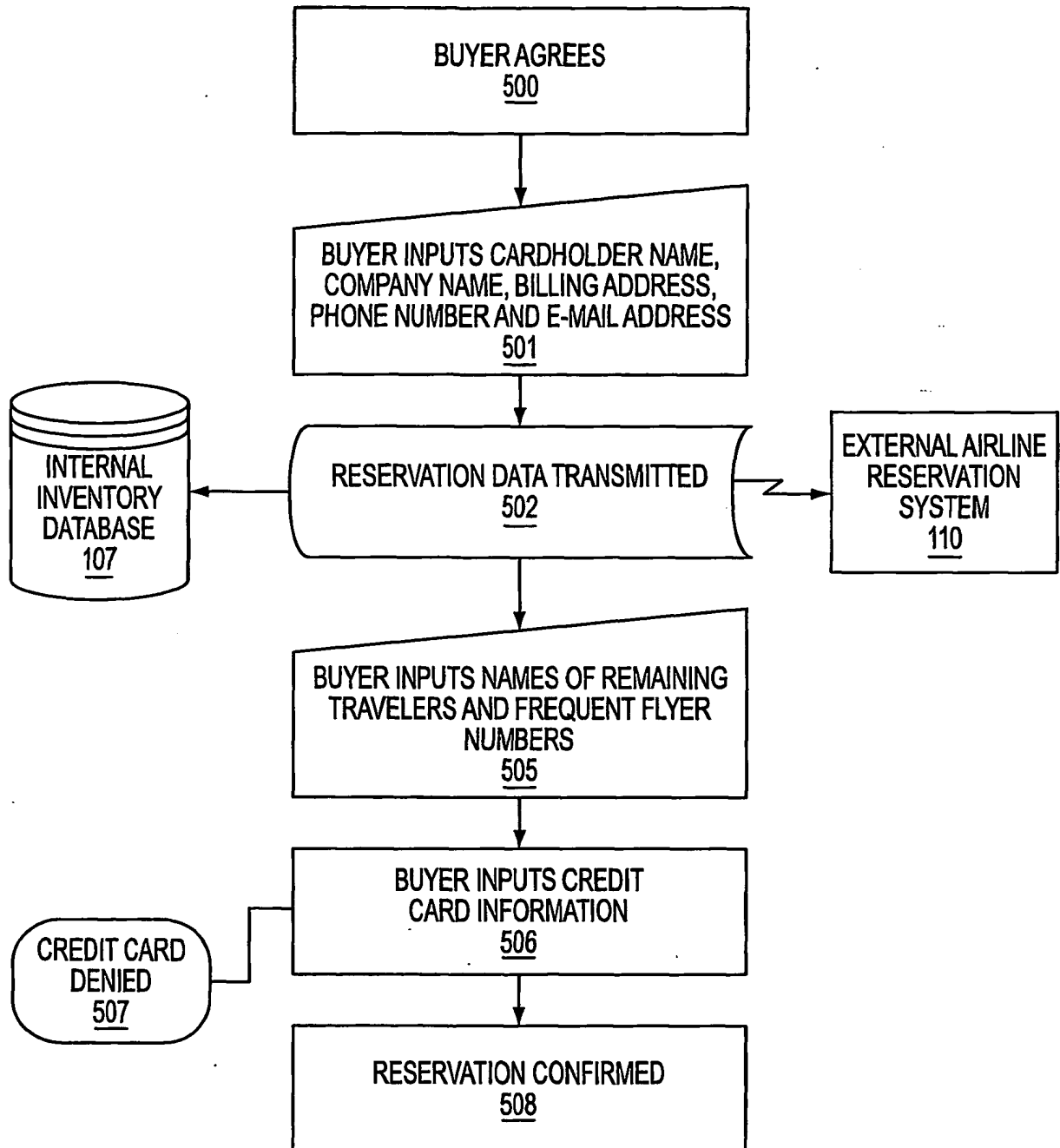


FIG. 5

6/6

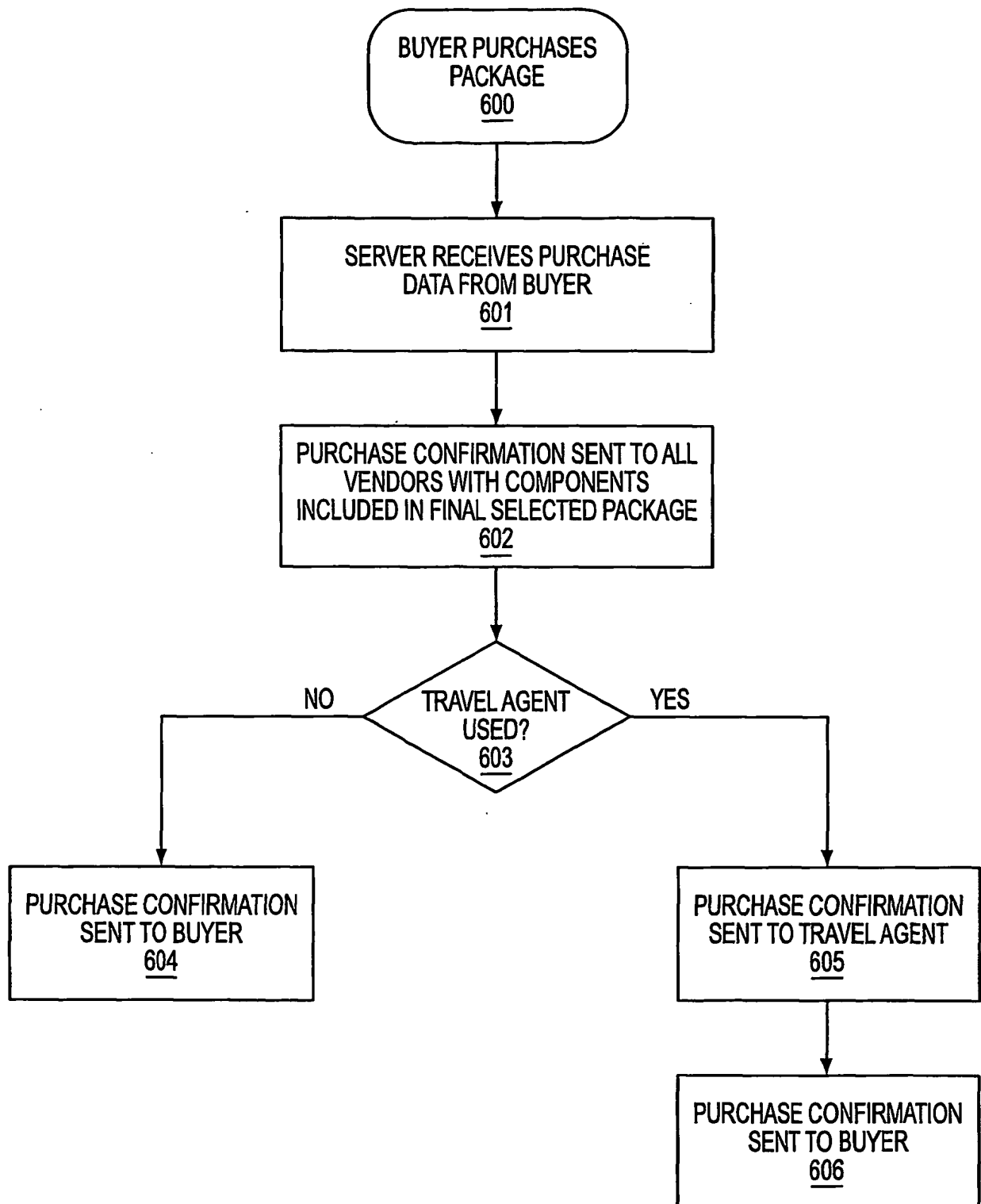


FIG. 6